



Dear students, staff, and faculty,

We are starting off the new school year with replenished energy and full of new ideas. For starters, we have decided to redesignate Chellis House as a Feminist Resource Center. Focused on feminist world-making, the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House is a space of encounter where scholars and activists meet to produce and share knowledge on social justice issues particularly attentive to gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and other vectors of difference. The Center gives students, staff and faculty the opportunity to acquire insights into this knowledge production through intimate discussion groups, public talks, and activist and artistic projects. It cultivates collaborative relationships with community organizations in Vermont and engages in a sustained exchange with major national and international organizations dedicated to the advancement of gender justice. As such, the center enables various aspects of the larger Middlebury vision of immersive learning and a full participation in diverse communities. In sum, the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House is a place where theory becomes praxis. If you would like to learn more about our activities, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Best wishes for a new school year,  
Dr. Karin Hanta  
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Feminist Resource Center  
at Chellis House*  
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## How do YOU fail the patriarchy?

Participants create art to be displayed alongside responses in the library.

This spring, the Chellis House crew collaborated with librarian Katrina Spencer on an interactive feminist installation in the Davis library entitled “fat n’ hairy: ways i’m failing the patriarchy.” The overall event included many parts: first, a go/link through which people could anonymously submit how they, personally, fail the patriarchy, followed by an evening at Chellis House on April 11, during which people wrote out their responses in person, on index cards, while socializing and enjoying snacks.

The installation itself began on April 16 and continued until April 23, 2018. During this time, index cards were available for library-goers to fill out and put on the screens. By the end of the event, two large bulletin boards were filled with responses, ranging from topics like gender identity and queerness to appearance and personality

traits that fail patriarchal ideals. A few examples of classic “fails:” “Not leaving the weight room when the football team comes to work out,” “not apologizing before I talk in class,” “traveling Europe alone as an 18 year old woman,” “not allowing policymakers to take away women’s control over their own bodies,” and simply “the patriarchy is failing US.” The display was accompanied by a selection of books by feminist authors, including Roxane Gay, Toni Morrison, and Ariel Levy. The installation portrayed a side of Middlebury not commonly embraced—one in which people are not perfect, at least in the conventional, patriarchal way. During “fat n’ hairy”, our “imperfections” were not hidden, but shared and celebrated. The index cards are now displayed on the walls of the Chellis House living room.

# Drue Gensler Memorial and Fraker Prize Celebrations!

On March 16, 2018, right in the middle of Women's History Month, students, staff, faculty, and alums came together for a celebration of life of trustee emerita Drue Gensler '56, who was an outstanding supporter of the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies and Chellis House. Five members of the Gensler family—Drue's husband Art, her granddaughters Aaron '08 and Mamie, and her son Doug and daughter-in-law Kinzie—also joined us for this memorable occasion. Those who had not met Drue during her lifetime could learn about her life and work in a pop-up exhibition, which covered her professional development as one of the co-founders of the global design firm Gensler Architects. Invitees also learned about Drue's activism for women's rights; her global philanthropy; her invaluable help to establish Chellis House in 1993 and support of the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies Program; and her support of



**Rebecca Wishnie '20, who won the 2018 Fraker Prize.**



**Friends and family of Drue Gensler.**

student internships and conference attendance, both nationally and abroad, through travel grants. A wide variety of people spoke about Drue's legacy, including her family members, former program chairs and alums, who had come to benefit from Drue's generosity through travel grants and academic prizes that Drue endowed, i.e. the Fraker Prize for best essay/project relating to Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies; the Gensler Thesis Prize; and the Marie Lafferty Cortell Theatre Prize, named in honor of Drue's mother.

Women's history month is also the month when the Fraker Prize has been traditionally awarded. Attendees of Drue Gensler's celebration of life learned about this year's winning projects: In her essay for Sujata Moorti's "Feminist Theory" class entitled "Motherhood

and the Divine Mother: Rewriting Jewish Resistance as Biomidrash," Rebecca Wishnie '20 applied Audre Lorde's concept of biomythography to analyze "midrash"—rabbinical (and sometimes lay) interpretations of gaps in biblical and Talmudic teachings and stories—to reclaim some means of knowledge production and explore what kinds of resistance and non-resistance she herself has enacted in learning of and creating midrashim. Through her discomfort with the male categorization of God, Rebecca describes how she turned to a female image of God, but also found it limiting:

"Did my disidentification with Adonai justify a reversal of the gender of the same sort of godly figure? Did the fact that She is feminine make her trans-



exclusionary? Did the semi-traditional femininity I ascribed to Her only serve to reinforce the gender norms and gender binary which I was trying to dismantle through the very concept of Her? Was the feminizing of divinity, the softening of the Almighty, a way to resist the phallogocentrism of Judaism, a sort of *féminine écriture*? (...) Perhaps [the analogy of God as lover] serves to demonstrate that an individual can have all kinds of bonds with God, romantic, sexual, and platonic. Regarding the Divine Mother, I do not often use the lover metaphor in my Judaism, but I am trying to become more comfortable with the possibility of sexual aspects to that relationship, especially when I speak of my 'conception' of Her."

A student group consisting of seniors Kisha Kalra, Lauren Schweppe, Kelsie Hoppes, Anna

Novak, and Toria Isquith created the website Reproductive Health in Vermont for Carly Thomsen's class "The Politics of Reproduction." In their research, they specifically focused on so-called "Pregnancy Resource Centers" in Middlebury and the state of Vermont overall. These religiously-informed centers claim to offer free services to women experiencing unintended pregnancies yet conceal their ideologies and spread false information about abortions—for example, that they lead to increased risk of breast cancer or mental illness—even though the US National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society have released official statements discrediting these supposed links. Kisha, Lauren, Kelsie, Anna, and Toria also created maps that show where abortion clinics and CPCs are in Vermont and published an op-ed.

For more information about their project, visit their website at <https://www.reproductivehealthvt.com/>.

Chandler Nemetz '18 received honorable mention for her exhibition "The Feminist Subversion of the Doll: Blurring Boundaries of Reality and Fantasy," which she staged for an independent project with Ellery Foutch's class. In this exhibition, Chandler explored how artists have subverted conventional definitions of a doll to call attention to the social constructions in our society. Through a visual progression of the doll and its home, she tried to make audiences understand how technology and society have progressed and transitioned over time.

This broad array of project attests to the breadth and depth of feminist intellectual endeavors at Middlebury. Drue would have been proud!



**Top left:** Drue's husband Art Gensler, and their granddaughter Aaron '08. **Top right:** Carly Thomsen's students (from left) Anna Novak, Kisha Kalra, Kelsie Hoppes, and Lauren Schweppe. **Bottom right:** Drue's son, Doug. **Bottom Left:** Drue's daughter-in-law Kinzie and granddaughter Mame.

# FEMINIST OF THE YEAR 2018

On Saturday, May 12, students, staff, and faculty gathered in the backyard of Chellis House, Middlebury College's feminist resource center, to celebrate all the nominees for Feminist of the Year. This year, a total of 39 people were nominated for the award, which honors those who actively engage with our community around issues of gender and sexuality as they are experienced in relation

to race, class, ability, and geography.

At the 25th edition of this annual award ceremony, laudatory remarks alternated with artistic contributions. This year, Jordana Solomon '20 opened the celebration with two of her poems. After that, Chellis House director Karin Hanta shared with the audience the nomination for Amanda Reinhardt, Assistant Director of Student Activities

and Orientation, who won the award in the staff category. The nominator commended Amanda for bringing feminist orientation and practice to her work with Student Activities and Orientation. Amanda has been key in encouraging the MiddView Trips program to focus on engaging with others across difference and helping MiddView trip leaders deepen their understanding of gender. Amanda brought Venture Out facilitators to the MiddView leader training to help create gender inclusive trips. Amanda also is an active member on the WomenSafe board, a local organization that serves people across the gender spectrum who experience sexual violence, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

Mikayla Hyman '20 paid tribute to faculty winner Erin Eggleston, who joined Middlebury as Assistant Professor of Biology last fall. Mikayla commended Professor Eggleston for her commitment to integrating the contributions of women, people of color, and queer people into class discussions and reminding students of their positionality as scientists and community members. "Professor Eggleston often brings up the idea that while it is tempting to assume that science is apolitical and unbiased, in reality, science and scientists often focus entirely on white male contributions, perspectives, and experiences," Mikayla Hyman said. Professor Eggleston's ethos of inclusivity has helped students envision a future for themselves in this field.



Mikayla Hyman '20 (left) nominated biology professor Erin Eggleston (right) for faculty FOTY.



As in years past, the jury decided to distinguish several students for their feminist work at Middlebury. They include a first-year student, a sophomore, and three seniors. Vishawn Greene '21 and Itzel Diaz '20 gave laudatory remarks for Treasure Brooks '21. Ever since coming to Middlebury last fall, Treasure has actively engaged with the Middlebury community around issues of gender and sex as they relate to race, class, ability, age, and place. The founder of the NGO Operation T.O.M., Treasure taught a workshop on body image at the yearly Sister-to-Sister Summit in November, enthusing the middle school audience. As the new co-president of the Black Student Union, she helped stage Apollo Night in March and The Night of Black Culture in April, which included a graduation ceremony for BSU members. Treasure also helped design the student contributions to this year's Gensler Symposium on Feminist Responses to Racism, organizing a fruitful discussion



**Grace Vedock '20 commends Taite Shomo's '20.5 feminist activism and efforts to support survivors of sexual violence.**

on the topic between various student groups.

Grace Vedock '20 gave the laudatory remarks for Taite Shomo '20.5. As the main organizer of this year's "It Happens Here"—an event that brings to light stories of sexual assault—Taite showed a deep commitment to bettering the College community by making all survivors of sexual assault feel safe and validated. A survivor herself, Taite is perceptive and respectful of other survivors' needs. They are

firm in their belief that survivors should be heard, validated and believed. Taite is an important touchpoint for people, seeking emotional support and they are fiercely committed to treating people with the utmost respect and kindness.

Izzy Lee '21 praised Natalie Cheung '18 and Pippa Raffel '18 for their efforts in establishing the student organization SPECS (Sex Positive Education College Style). Over the past two years, Natalie and Pippa have developed a curriculum to educate their peers on contraception and consent. Pippa and Natalie staged a wide variety of events such as a sex-positive Valentine's celebration, a sex-ed bingo night, and set up informational tables in front of the dining halls on various occasions.

Finally, Cara Eisenstein '18 was also honored as a student feminist of the year. Annie Blalock '20.5 commended Cara for her work with the student organization Feminist Action at Middlebury (FAM) during the last 3.5 years. As the co-



**Nominator Vishawn Greene '21 and FOTY Treasure Brooks '21. Treasure was praised for her activism related to the Black Student Union (BSU), Sister-to-Sister, and the 2018 Gensler Symposium.**



president of FAM, Cara set up a Generation Action chapter within FAM to collaborate with Planned Parenthood Northern New England. Within the framework of this chapter, Cara helped raise awareness about state laws that undermine the Fourteenth Amendment of 1973, which legalized women's right to privacy. Through various informative events, Middlebury's Generation Action chapter is harnessing the power, energy, and enthusiasm of young people to fight for reproductive freedom and for fundamental justice for all.

The event concluded with Madison Jean Philippe '20 performing his original song "Promise Me."

# SNAPSHOTS

## FROM THE PICNIC



**ABOVE:** Students eating and chatting during the picnic. **RIGHT:** Isha Kothari and Sophie Clark, both '21 flash a smile for the camera. **BELOW:** Chellis House workers with director Karin Hanta.



**ABOVE:** Nominator Annie Blalock '20 with FOTY Cara Eistenstein '18. Cara was a crucial member and leader of Feminist Action at Middlebury (FAM) for 3.5 years. **RIGHT:** FOTYs Natalie Cheung and Pippa Raffel, both '18, with their nominator Izzy Lee '21. Cheung and Raffel started an organization to educate their peers on contraception and consent.



**ABOVE:** Izzy Lee '21 commending Natalie Cheung and Pippa Raffel for their feminist efforts over the past two years.





# Social Reproduction of Life and the Emancipatory Totalities of Dalit History

By: Mikayla Hyman '20

Tithi Bhattacharya, professor of Southeastern Studies and Global History at Purdue University, spoke of the Dalits' role in activism and the reproduction of oppression as a keynote speaker in the 2018 Gensler Symposium. Dalits are part of a social group in India also known as "untouchables." While Dalits currently account for 1 out of every 6 Indians, they still face discrimination. Currently, a crime is committed against a Dalit person every 18 minutes.

After explaining the place of Dalits within Indian society, Bhattacharya explored the minority's histories of resistance through a Marxist framework. She

argued that it is important to understand history through the lens of social reproduction theory. To understand how oppression is reproduced through economic means, it is first important to understand the root of Dalit oppression: other economic factors. Dalits, the indigenous peoples of India, were conquered by the Aryans who created Hinduism to keep Dalits oppressed. "Untouchables" did not have a right to property or economic prosperity.

The Indian Communist Party (CPI), might have been able to stop oppression of Dalits, if they had gone about activism differently. The CPI rejuvenated activism in the Dalit community, and helped

Dalits form a united front with women. However, this movement failed to adequately address the oppression Dalits faced because the CPI exclusively endorsed activism against the colonial struggle. They thought class was the only issue of importance and that class and gender struggles should be handled after an economic change occurred. Consequently, Dalits split from the CPI and worked hard to gain equal rights.

One prominent Dalit, B. R. Ambedkar, helped to write India's constitution, which enacted changes so that Dalits could not be legally discriminated against. However, untouchability was still practiced; it is not enough to legislate changes; instead, the underlying ideology of the nation must change. Currently, the place of "untouchables" is an essential prop to maintain the economic dominance of the Hindu majority, and it is accompanied by other oppressive tactics, such as misogyny and homophobia. It is only through an intersectional approach that pays attention to gender, class, and caste that lasting change can occur.

Bhattacharya argues that successful activism focuses on a range of social indignities, including both class and caste.





These were the keynote speakers of the **2018 Gensler Symposium: Resist! Feminists Respond to Racism**. Other events included:

Movie  
"Whose Streets"

Wikipedia  
Edit-a-thon

Movie  
"Out in the Night"

# Collaboration with the Dead on the Erotic Life of Race Work: *The Example of Muriel Rukeyser*

By Mikayla Hyman '20



Rosemary Hennessy is a Professor of English at Rice University. In her keynote talk for the 2018 Gensler Symposium, Hennessy revealed what feminists today can learn about anti-racist organizing from an artist who was active seventy years ago.

Muriel Rukeyser was a radical poet and journalist in the 1930s, loosely affiliated with the US Communist Party's anti-racism campaigns. She was close friends with Nancy Naumberg, a fellow journalist and documentary filmmaker. During a trip with Naumberg to report about the poisoning of hundreds of predominantly black miners in West Virginia, Rukeyser's diaries detail her reckoning with her romantic and sexual feelings towards Naumberg. While Naumberg recognized the love Rukeyser had for her, they both

witnessed the institutional abuse of black men. As Rukeyser faced the shame of her feelings for Nancy, so too did her poetry express a feeling of shame for all those who are complicit in racism and the deaths of the black miners. It was Rukeyser's desires from other life events, the shame and passion she felt in other areas of her life that affected the emotions and passion about her activism.

Hennessy also explained this idea through examining Rukeyser's relationship with African-American writer, Alice Walker, who was her student at Sarah Lawrence in the 1960s. Rukeyser came to care for Alice Walker, and subsequently introduced Walker to Monica McCall, Walker's first editor and Rukeyser's lover. When Walker left McCall for a new editor, Rukeyser

felt betrayed and admonished Walker for forgetting the white help that launched her career. Rukeyser overshadowed the role that Walker's black mentors had, while emphasizing her own white entitlement. It was only after Rukeyser's death that her poem of apology to Alice Walker was published. Rukeyser's political commitments, work against racism, were complicated by her desires and commitments to others.

As an activist, Rukeyser's desires, losses, sexuality, and political commitments, informed her place as an activist. Today, feminist activists could learn from Rukeyser's experience—it is important to understand one's own experiences in an intersectional manner to be the most effective activist possible.





# Senior Work Presentations: The Pinnacle of GSFS Knowledge

Senior work presentation day is a day we all look forward to. Students are afforded the opportunity to present focused intellectual insights they have gathered carrying out research for their thesis or senior project during a semester or throughout the school year. On May 15, 2018, thirteen students took to the podium at Hillcrest to talk about a wide variety of research subjects centered around gender, sexuality, and feminist studies. Among them were our majors: Jeremy Alben, Becca Brown, Elizabeth Dunn, Morgan Grady-Benson, Sarah Karerat, Cicilia Robison, and Erin Work. While Jeremy presented three podcasts about the #metoo movement in the restaurant industry entitled “#metoo on the Menu,” Cicilia analyzed the historical moment through a web archive investigation that has allowed for the movement to be more successful than other campaigns. Her senior work was entitled “Monstrous Masculinity and the #metoo Movement: An Exploration of Why These Men and Why Now.” Both Morgan Grady-Benson and Emma Hampsten focused on the Middlebury campus in their work. In her thesis entitled “Anti-Sexual Assault Activism and Sexual Assault

Prevention at Middlebury: What Are We Doing and Where Do We Go?,” Morgan pointed out that the campus needs to address toxic masculinity by working with student activists. Emma Hampsten showed her

Chittenden County, analyzing how the idea of fetal personhood is having a negative impact on state policies and further criminalizes marginalized women. In her creative work “Forgetting and Remembering,” Elizabeth Dunn explored how the experience of being dehumanized is passed down through generations and how shared history is experienced differently.

Sarah Karerat and Becca

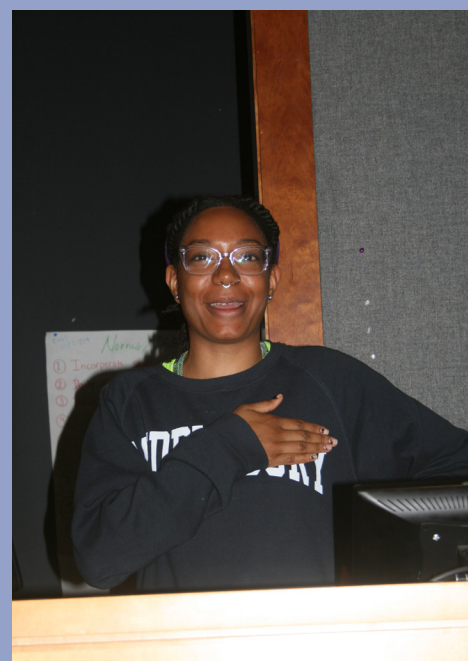


GSFS graduates Becca Brown (right) and Erin Work. Becca Brown won the 2018 Gensler Prize for her senior work.

documentary “Love You and Like You” in which various female-identified students reflected on the hook up culture. In her thesis entitled “Reproductive Bodies, Consumptive Womanhood: Food and Drugs as Sites of Gender Regulation during Pregnancy,” Erin Work investigated CHARM, the Children and Recovering Mothers collaborative of

Brown ventured outside of the United States in their work. In “Unraveling Bonds, Broadening Contours: Excavating the Matrilineal Nair Woman from the Colonial Archive,” Sarah investigated how the taravad—a family unit headed by women in the Nair community in the South Indian state of Kerala—was outlawed in the wake of

British colonialism, relegating women to the domestic sphere. Sarah documented through archival research how some women still contested this usurpation of power by men by leaving a mark on society as teachers, doctors, and politicians. In her senior essay “Heaven and Earth? Gender, Human-Wildlife, Conflict, and Environmental Vulnerabilities in Bengal’s Sundarban Delta,” Becca Brown employed a feminist lens to explore the historical, economic, political, and ecological contexts that have produced an environment in which the low-caste and highly marginalized communities living on the periphery of the world’s largest halophytic mangrove forest negotiate high levels of corporeal vulnerability. Becca sought to deconstruct the power flows and epistemologies that have given rise to a multitude of subjectivities on the borders of this UNESCO world heritage site. For this research endeavor, Becca also received the Gensler Prize at the end of the semester. Several students from other departments also presented work that had a GSFS focus. Congratulations to all of our graduates!



Clockwise from top: GSFS graduates Emma Hampsten, Elizabeth Dunn, and Cicilia Robinson.



Above, from left: GSFS graduates Jeremy Alben, Morgan Grady-Benson, and Sarah Karerat.